

JUL 29 2004

Food Guide Pyramid Reassessment Team  
USDA Center for Nutrition Policy and Promotion  
3101 Park Center Drive, Room 1034  
Alexandria VA 22302

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10F2

Martin

July 26, 2004

Dear Reassessment Team,

I read the Federal Register (FR) Volume 69, Number 133 with great interest. I have actually always been a fan of the Food Guide Pyramid and what it is meant to portray, and the tag line: Balance, Variety and Moderation.

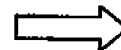
I am greatly disturbed to read of possibly changing the graphic. Changing it will once again bring ridicule to the field of public health. I can see the news now saying something like, "The government changed their minds again - now that you know the Food Guide Pyramid, forget it! It was wrong."

There is nothing wrong with the Pyramid if it is interpreted correctly (donuts, croissants, etc. should not be interpreted as "grains" and white bread ought not to have been stripped of its nutrient value). The enemy is hydrogenated oils and too much added sugar (as indicated in the Food Guide Pyramid). So many of the items that people think of as "grains" are loaded with both!

I taught wellness classes at the undergraduate level, and I used the Food Guide Pyramid extensively for the nutrition topic. Of course, when I talked about grains, I pointed out that WHOLE grains are the real deal. And who could argue with fruits and vegetables... the trick is eating the WHOLE food including the fiber (not the Southern version of vegetables: peeled and fried and/or cooked in meat fat - as those practices drive it toward the tip of the Pyramid). For Meats and Dairy - I taught the students to select the lower fat versions, as saturated fat is next after hydrogenated fats for promoting ill-health.

I strongly encourage retaining the current Pyramid graphic and relaying the important messages about whole foods - not processed foods. Balance, variety and moderation are good key concepts. Keeping fat (especially hydrogenated and saturated) and sugar down to a minimum is important for weight control and health in general. Please work with the current graphic and help people understand the important messages for health! Don't replace the Pyramid that so many people know and recognize - if we can get people to eat the majority of their diet from the base of the Pyramid: "whole grains, fruits, and vegetables" - what a healthy country we would become ☺

Over



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Martin

As far as other parts of the RR, I was pleased to read of these proposals:

- The Daily Food Intake Patterns with inclusion of sub-groups for vegetables and grains, and maximum added fats and sugars sound good.
- The calorie balance message is important (as long as you do NOT say exercise this much if you eat this) ... exercise is not punishment for eating; we have to eat, and we have to move! Do both!
- On-demand information, such as food sources for specific nutrients sound good.
- Child specific (age appropriate) messages sounds good. Meanwhile, remember that so many adults can only read at childhood levels

Thanks for opportunity to provide input,



Sarah Martin, PhD

JUL 29 2004

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Andersen

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Timothy Andersen

Troy, NY

July 25, 2004

Food Guide Pyramid Reassessment Team  
USDA Center for Nutrition Policy and Promotion  
3101 Park Center Drive, Room 1034  
Alexandria, VA 22302

To Whom it May Concern,

My name is Timothy Andersen and I'm writing to share my thoughts on the USDA Food Guide Pyramid. My comments are based on my experience controlling carbohydrates, which have helped me to regain control of my health and my weight.

In May of 2002 I had to undergo a physical for entrance to graduate school. Up until that point I thought I had done well in trying to lose weight using a traditional low fat/increased exercise regimen. Even though I was often hungry, I endured for nearly a year. However, I had not visited a doctor in all that time. Therefore, I did not keep tabs on my other health metrics such as cholesterol or bloodpressure, only weight. I had succeeded thus far to lose 25 lbs. and was looking forward to good physical results. I was astonished when I learned that I had a bloodpressure of 165/90. That was up from 140/90 the previous year. Angry, and feeling that the government had given me bad advice, I decided to quit my low fat diet and started on Atkins, which my wife had recently begun. Two months later I had lost another 25 lbs., my bloodpressure was 120/70, and I was never hungry.

My comments are as follows: I feel that the current food pyramid, while perhaps based on the best information present in the early '90's has

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Andersen

fallen well behind the massive scientific advances in nutrition during the last twelve years. Millions of Americans have discovered that controlling carbohydrates works, and whatever advice the government chooses to give them, they will still try whatever seems to work. Therefore, I feel it is the duty of the government to give them guidelines so that greedy diet pushers will not lead them astray. However, if the USDA continues to advise using a high-carbohydrate, low-fat pyramid, nutritional anarchy will ensue as fewer and fewer (and fatter and fatter) people choose to follow the government's recommendations.

Please take these comments into consideration as you re-evaluate and redesign the Food Guide Pyramid.

Sincerely,

Timothy Andersen

Stephen M. Flanagan

Spring Valley, Ca.

Food Guide Pyramid Reassessment Team  
USDA Center for Nutrition Policy and Promotion  
3101 Park Center Drive, Room 1034  
Alexandria, VA 22302

To Whom it May Concern,

My name is Stephen M. Flanagan and I'm writing to share my thoughts on the USDA Food Guide Pyramid. My comments are based on my experience controlling carbohydrates, which have helped me to regain control of my health and my weight.

I am 43 years old and have retired from military duty. During most of my adult life I have had a weight problem and while on active duty I was placed on the overweight program more than once during my 20-year career. It was a constant battle and I was referred to dietitians for help with my problem. I had high blood pressure, heart burn, was tired all the time, back pain, knee problems, and my cholesterol and blood sugar were getting out of control. But I was always able to pass my Physical Fitness tests and starve myself long enough to pass the weigh-ins so I could stay in the Military.

Once I retired I really packed on the weight and ballooned up to 288 lbs from 220. My medical problems got even worse. Additionally my wife is overweight and has medical problems as well. We tried dieting and counting calories but nothing seemed to work. I had no energy and it was really getting hard to exercise and try to burn off the weight.

I talked to my Doctor to see if I could take some medication to help me loose weight and lower my cholesterol and blood sugar. He told me I was going to have to make changes in my life because I was going to be a diabetic soon if I kept going the way I was going. He recommended a low carbohydrate diet so I decided to check into it.

I have been on a low carbohydrate diet since December of 2003. I have gown from 288 lbs to 224 lbs and my cholesterol and blood sugar have both dropped significantly. I have energy, no more heart burn, and because of the weight loss my back and knees feel better. I am sticking with this life change and plan to get down to 190 lbs. Some of my coworkers have also gotten on the low carb diet and they have nothing but good things to say about it. My wife is down to 175 lbs from 198 lbs and still loosing, and her cholesterol and blood sugar have dropped as well.

As I said, I had been "ordered" to see dietitians and had no real successes from plans they had me follow. I always ended up having to starve myself so I could pass the tape test. I wish I had been on the low carb diet while I was on active duty, it would have made my life so much easier. The best thing that really helped us was the low carb diet. We eat good food and have a healthier life style. It's just a better way of life. I feel that you should really look at changing the USDA Food Guide Pyramid to reflect a low carbohydrate lifestyle. Let's help stamp out obesity and diabetes for our children.

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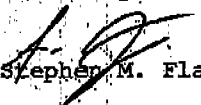
Flanagan

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Flanagan

Please take these comments into consideration as you re-evaluate and redesign the Food Guide Pyramid.

Sincerely,

  
Stephen M. Flanagan



# Rensselaer

DEPARTMENT OF BIOLOGY

JUL 29 2004

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26 July 2004

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Clarkson

Food Guide Pyramid Team  
USDA Center for Nutrition Policy and Promotion  
3101 Park Center Drive, Room 1034  
Alexandria, VA 22302

I am responding to a newspaper article in the New York Times asking for comments on the food pyramid graphic and educational materials.

I suggest a three-layer approach:

- 1) Display the food groups (fruit, vegetables, grains, and meat/dairy) in an easily recognizable graphic that communicates without relying on words.
- 2) Provide a table that reiterates the graphic. Importantly, the table makes people aware of the "hidden ingredients" of fat/sugar/salt common to each food group. I believe that this is a critical message. The food pyramid does acknowledge fats, oils, and sweets at its apex. However, there needs to be a distinction between the foods the individual needs to actively include in the diet and those that most individuals will automatically consume in sufficient quantities (or may need to be limited).
- 3) Supplementary information on serving sizes and the number of servings recommended per day.

I have included panels displaying my ideas for the first two objectives.

If you are interested in using any part of this proposal, I look forward to hearing from you.

mti cll

Melissa Clarkson

Graduate student  
Department of Biology

Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute

Troy, NY

USA

Phone

Fax

Food group	Examples	Extra ingredients to avoid
<b>Fruits</b> Select a variety of fresh, frozen, and canned fruits.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ citrus fruits (orange, grapefruit)</li> <li>▪ berries (strawberry, raspberry)</li> <li>▪ melons (cantaloupe, watermelon)</li> <li>▪ apple</li> <li>▪ pear</li> <li>▪ banana</li> <li>▪ pineapple</li> <li>▪ peach</li> <li>▪ plum</li> </ul>	Minimize added sugar.
<b>Vegetables</b> Choose a variety of fresh, frozen, and canned vegetables, particularly darkly colored varieties.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ roots (carrot, onion, turnip, potato)</li> <li>▪ leaves (lettuce, cabbage, spinach)</li> <li>▪ stalks (celery)</li> <li>▪ pods (beans, peas)</li> <li>▪ floral (cauliflower, broccoli)</li> </ul>	Minimize added fat (oil, butter, margarine).
<b>Grains</b> Select minimally processed, whole grain products.	Wheat, corn, rice, and oats found in products such as pasta, bread, cereal, tortillas, and crackers.	Minimize added sugar, fat, and salt. Choose products made with whole grain flour instead of processed "white" flour.
<b>Meat and Dairy</b> Supplement your diet with a several servings of this food group each day.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ fish and seafood</li> <li>▪ red meat (beef, ham)</li> <li>▪ poultry (chicken, turkey)</li> <li>▪ dairy (milk, cheese, yogurt)</li> <li>▪ nuts and peanuts</li> <li>▪ eggs</li> <li>▪ tofu</li> </ul>	Minimize fat content of meat and milk.



Meat and Dairy

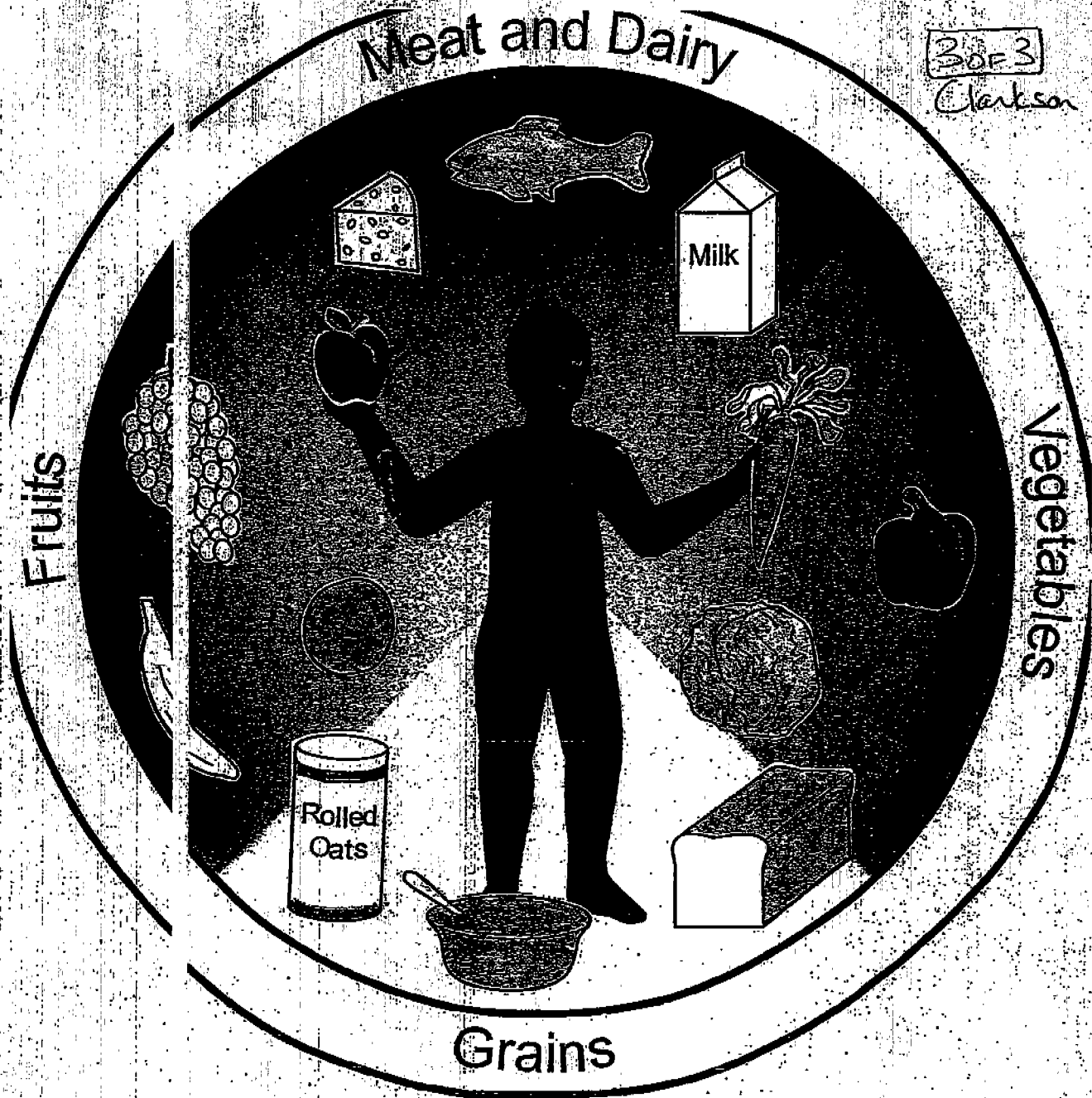
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Clarkson

Fruits

Vegetables

Grains



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Easthampton, MA

July 24, 2004

JUL 29 2004

10P4

Barrie

Food Guide Pyramid Reassessment Team  
USDA Center for Nutrition Policy and Promotion  
3101 Park Center Drive, Room 1034  
Alexandria, VA 22302

To Whom It May Concern,

My name is Erika Barrie, and I am writing to share my thoughts on the USDA Food Guide Pyramid. My comments are based on my experience controlling carbohydrates, which have helped me to regain control of my health and my weight. I wish you to consider these comments in your re-design of the Food Guide Pyramid, in the hopes that the USDA will recognize that there is no one diet that works for everyone, and that there are members of the population for whom a lower carbohydrate, higher protein and higher fat diet works better than a primarily low fat, semi-vegetarian diet. I am hoping that the growing evidence that a high protein diet works for many, many Americans will lead the USDA to conclude that Americans need to work carefully with their physicians to determine which, of a number of possible dietary regimens, works best for them. The current scheme, in which "low fat" is the only diet taught to dieticians as acceptable, is inapplicable to many Americans, and in the end, potentially harmful to their health.

I am 29 years old, and from age 14 until last August, I suffered from migraines, sinus infections and severe colds, nasal and skin allergies to pollen, mold, and dust, irritable bowel syndrome, joint aches in my hands and knees, irregular menstrual periods, terrible canker sores in my mouth and throat, and severe mood swings and mental confusion when I became hungry at unpredictable points. I never responded to any medication for any of these conditions. Doctors never diagnosed me as hypoglycemic, although juvenile diabetes ran in my mother's family. Even as a small child, I had always suffered from bad colds and allergies. None of this was enough to make me really feel like a chronic invalid, but I never really felt 100%, and over time, the dread of having a flare up of symptoms began to make me feel worn out, and also a little bit crazy. Since doctors never diagnosed me with migraines, hypoglycemia, or arthritis, I began to feel like a hypochondriac, and at the same time, felt extremely depressed and sorry for myself. In the back of my mind, I began to accept that I would always be "poorly," and that there was really nothing I could do about it.

I had grown up eating "three square meals" a day: meat, vegetable, starch, and dairy at every meal. I had problems with my weight until high school, when I began playing two sports a season, all year. I'd decided I just had a slow metabolism. I became less active after some sports injuries in college, but was able to maintain a weight at the high end of the normal range, according to my doctor. After graduation from law school, and getting married to someone ten years older than me, I decided to eat healthier, and switched to a low-fat, primarily vegetarian diet. My husband and I ate a mix of "white" and whole-grain carbohydrates with our vegetables, and ate chicken or fish once or twice a week. We would have eggs and butter on weekends, as a treat. I did yoga three times a week, and we

20F4 Barrie

walked nearly every day after supper, as well as hiking on weekends. Throughout all this time, my physical symptoms persisted. After about three months on this low fat diet, however, I began to gain weight, despite the fact that I was maintaining the same level of activity. Many of my physical ailments worsened, especially my hypoglycemic tendencies and the presence of migraine headaches.

In March, 2003, however, after about a sixty pound weight gain, I stopped getting my period, despite being on the birth control pill and clear evidence that I was not pregnant. Between March and August 2003, I gained another ten pounds as I saw multiple doctors, trying to figure out what was wrong with my. I was finally diagnosed with polycystic ovarian syndrome, an androgen disorder in which a woman's ovaries, due to hormonal imbalance, essentially dry up and become cyst-like. PCOS is also characterized by excess testosterone, weight gain, depression, and sometimes facial hair and acne. Women with PCOS run a high risk of developing heart disease, as well as type II diabetes. My doctor recommended a low-carbohydrate eating plan, since one component of PCOS is insulin resistance, in which the body uses insulin improperly, and creates unnecessary fat stores.

I did some reading on PCOS, and read about different low-carbohydrate diets. I eventually chose the Atkins diet after reading Dr. Atkins' New Diet Revolution, the 2000 edition. In that book, Dr. Atkins actually discussed the role of a low-carbohydrate diet for women suffering from PCOS. My husband pointed out that the book also discussed yeast overgrowth syndrome, in which it is believed that sugar-bearing products cause an overgrowth of yeast in the intestines, causing multiple inflammatory symptoms, such as migraine, canker sores, intense allergies, chronic colds, lowered immunity, irritable bowel syndrome, and joint pain. I felt, for the first time, as if someone who understood what I had been going through. My blood pressure was 110/70. I had my blood cholesterol tested, and had a combined level of 142—within acceptable limits, thought I needed to fix my HDL to LDL ratio. I weighed 224 pounds when I started my diet on August 24, 2003. I followed the food lists and carbohydrate limits listed in the book, and took the additional precaution of cutting out those remaining foods (vinegars and mushrooms, mostly) that were allowed in the regular diet but which were known to promote yeast growth.

I did other research about yeast intolerance, and spoke with my doctor about it. Conventional medicine sites and my doctor dismissed it as quackery, but there were many, many, anecdotal stories on the internet about women who had suffered the same symptoms as I had, and they emailed me in response to my inquiries to encourage me to follow the Atkins diet, with the modifications he recommended in the book. Each of them explained the same feeling of relief and vindication at finding a diet that had literally changed their lives.

My husband, who had gained weight on our low-fat diet too, decided to do the diet with me, and to stay on a low-carbohydrate eating plan with me if it worked. The first three days of the diet, we felt exactly as the book said we would, and that we were in carbohydrate withdrawal. Immediately thereafter, however, we began to feel much better, with much more energy.

After two weeks, all of my "inflammatory" symptoms were gone. I have not had a migraine, sinus infection, cold, or allergy attack since. My joint pain is significantly reduced, and only flares up when I overindulge in carbohydrates over about 65 "net" grams per day. (Total grams of carbohydrates, less grams of fiber). My hypoglycemia and depression have vanished. My periods returned after I lost thirty pounds by Thanksgiving. By Christmas, I had lost forty pounds, and felt like a new woman. It is

3 of 4 **Barrie**

now eleven months later, and I have lost seventy pounds, and am still losing. Most importantly, however, I am no longer subject to any of the physical symptoms that had always made me feel like I would never be fully healthy. My cholesterol is actually down, to 120, and my HDL:LDL is optimal. My blood pressure is 100/60. Interestingly, I had always had fine hair, oily skin, and brittle, slow growing fingernails. That, too, has changed, and my hair is thicker, my skin less spot-prone, and my fingernails now grow long and strong. My husband has lost all the weight he gained during our low fat diet, and his blood pressure and cholesterol, which were normal, are even lower.

We do not restrict our fat intake, but neither do we eat red meat, bacon, and triple-crème cheeses every day. I have eggs or a whole-milk yogurt/whey powder smoothie for breakfast. I have a large green salad with lean protein—chicken or tuna—for lunch. I have some form of protein, about 6 oz., with a green vegetable, usually broccoli, zucchini, or string beans, for dinner. And we have red meat (lamb or beef) no more than once a week. We eat salmon and tuna at least once a week, snack on low fat mozzarella cheese sticks, and natural peanut butter with celery, and eat almonds for snacks. We are the town's largest consumers of herbal tea and seltzer water.

I don't buy pre-packaged low-carbohydrate foods, and I don't cook with artificial sweeteners. It's not my style, since I am a good cook, and take pride in cooking from scratch. I am concerned about the growth of low carb packaged foods, because it's going to give people an easy out. I didn't buy packaged low-fat foods or have sweets in the house previously, but it didn't do me any good. Now, when we want dessert, I poach fruit in wine, and I make whipped cream sweetened with stevia. We have a glass of wine with our dinner, occasionally, and have become connoisseurs of the brassica family of vegetables. I cook with whole grains like bulgur, and will make pizza crusts from whole wheat flour. We eat chickpeas, and lentils, and love hummus with cucumber "chips." And our grocery bill is actually smaller every week; we buy, and eat, less food than when we were following what is still considered a "healthy" diet. When I overindulge in carbohydrates, my symptoms come back—it's enough to convince me that to me, starches over a certain amount are poison. The framework articulated in the Atkins New Diet Revolution made it all possible, and I return to the book time and again to refute naysayers, dispel the "bacon three times a day" myths, and prove to women feeling lost like I was that there is a way to feel better.

Since we started our diets, our families have also become lower-carbohydrate converts. My in-laws have lost forty pounds so far; my mother, who exceeded three hundred pounds, has lost fifty pounds, just cutting out pasta, rice, and simple sugar. None of them have experienced any increases in cholesterol or blood pressure, and all have reported similar increased well being.

I do not presume to think that the low-carbohydrate way of eating works for everyone, but there needs to be some recognition that the low fat diet does not, either. It is time to abandon any attempt at defining "one true way," and agree that there are several possible approaches. Work can then begin on formulating some kind of informational nexus to assist doctors and dieters in identifying what plan works for them. And Americans need to learn again what to eat, and how to take care of themselves—including weaning them off of packaged foods marketed by conglomerates who undoubtedly lobby the USDA incessantly. This requires real commitment on the government's part, and a willingness to admit that it has been wrong, and that it's willing to now reconsider the different way we all need to learn to approach food.

4024 Barrie

Americans need to learn to cook and eat locally, organically, seasonally, and sustainably. If they choose to eat animal products, they should eat organic, free range, drug free animal products, raised sustainably. If they choose to eat grains, they should not be genetically modified. And they (and their doctors) need to be taught how to match their health symptoms with the possible food causes, so that they can make the choices that will bring them to optimum health. The USDA can do many things to further these causes, through all of its policies, of which the food pyramid is just the tip of the iceberg.

Please take these comments into consideration as you re-evaluate and redesign the Food Guide Pyramid, and please feel free to contact me at the above address if you have any questions.

Sincerely,

*Erika Barrie*

Erika Barrie

JUL 29 2004

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1 of 1 Wawi

Elias Wawi

Houston, Texas

Food Guide Pyramid Reassessment Team  
USDA Center for Nutrition Policy and Promotion  
3101 Park Center Drive, Room 1034  
Alexandria, VA 22302

To whom it may concern,


My name is Elias Wawi. About 11 years ago, I started following the standard pyramid. In about six years, I went from 185 lbs to 240 lbs. My craving for bread, bagels, low fat muffins, low fat yogurt, cereals, etc, kept creeping higher and higher. About five years ago, my wife could not bear seeing me grow like a pregnant lady, decided to put me on the Atkins diet. Here is what happened:

- 1) I lost about 40 lbs in about 8 months
- 2) I started feeling much better immediately
- 3) I got rid of headaches and sugar craving
- 4) My cholesterol went down from over 400 to 250.

I have been on a low carb diet since then. I eat plenty of vegetables, nuts, fish, meat, chicken and eggs. I enjoy artificially sweetened products and I selectively eat some fruit. I have been able to maintain my weight, my low cholesterol and my high energy level. In the last couple of years, I helped several people with changing their eating habits. They are all following a low carb regimen now. I really fell sorry for all those people who follow the standard pyramid recommendation. They do not know what kind of damage they are causing themselves. Please do not abuse the trust people have in you. Do not disregard what we, the people, are feeling through our real life experience. Listen to us.

Thanks

Elias wawi







Redding, CA

JUL 29 2004

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1 OF 1 Benfield

July 26, 2004

Food Guide Pyramid Reassessment Team  
USDA Center for Nutrition Policy and Promotion  
3101 Park Center Drive, Room 1034  
Alexandria, VA 22302

To Whom It May Concern:

I have been following the proposed changes in the food pyramid and thought I would put my 2 cents in.

First of all I think the Food Pyramid graphic is confusing to people. It gives mixed messages about how much of things to eat. I would like to suggest the pie chart graphic as an alternative. One food is not placed above or below another and it does not create "good" and "bad" food. I am 53 years old and believe it or not I clearly remember my nutrition classes from elementary and high school. What I remember is a table with many different food groups on it and the suggestion to eat a "balanced diet" every day, food from every food group. That has worked for me, and I have been fortunate to have good health and have maintained a healthy weight.

Thanks for making a forum for my opinion.

Sincerely,

*Sandy Benfield*

Sandy Benfield  
Early Care and Education Teacher

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